



Information for COPES Applicants

You recently called Pathways Information and Assistance about the COPES program. COPES stands for Community Options Program Entry System. COPES provides personal care for people who would otherwise need nursing home care. The COPES program gives people with limited income and assets the ability to receive much needed care and maintain an independent lifestyle.

People on COPES can choose to receive services either in their own homes or move to state licensed Assisted Living Facilities or Adult Family Homes. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers the COPES program through the division of Home and Community Services (HCS).

Steps to Getting COPES Services

Step 1 – Intake: Pathways Information and Assistance, 206-448-3110

Intake is the initial request for services. During intake, a Community Support Specialist of Pathways Information and Assistance gathers basic information, a description of your needs, and determines if you meet the basic COPES requirements. There is also a brief orientation to the COPES program, including the personal care and financial guidelines. The Specialist will answer any initial questions you have about the program and tell you what to expect as you go through the application process. The application process is complex. Some of the financial guidelines are especially confusing. The Specialists are resource people with whom you may consult at any time.

Your information is then given to Home and Community Services.

Step 2 – The Financial Application: Home & Community Services, 206-341-7750

After completing intake, you will need to call Home and Community Services (HCS) to get the financial application. You can request applications from HCS the same day you call Pathways Information and Assistance. Completing the financial application early will expedite the overall process. If you need assistance getting the application mailed or emailed to you, a specialist can help. You may also start the application process online at www.washingtonconnection.org

The COPES/Medicaid application determines your financial eligibility for COPES. Your financial application will be processed by a financial worker at HCS. You will be asked to provide documentation of your financial resources for the past 5 years. Relevant documents include bank statements, Social Security award letters, and verification of assets. If you have difficulty with any part of the application process, such as filling out the COPES/Medicaid application, the HCS worker should assist you or a Pathways specialist can answer questions. Call us at 206-448-3110 or 1-888-435-3377.

Step 3 – The Personal Care Evaluation:

Home and Community Services, 206-341-7750

Your case will be assigned to an HCS social worker or case manager who will conduct a personal care evaluation. **This evaluation is the tool used to determine if you meet the personal care requirements for COPES.** It also identifies the activities with which you need assistance. An HCS social worker is responsible for completing the personal care assessment. The HCS social worker will contact you or a designated family member to schedule a home visit after he or she receives the intake information from Pathways Information and Assistance. Contact usually is made within 10 business days.

You must need assistance with two or more personal care needs to qualify for COPES.

Tasks can include but are not limited to the following:

- *Bathing/showering assistance*
- *Dressing and undressing*
- *Toileting*
- *Walking/wheelchair mobility*
- *Transfers in and out of a wheelchair*
- *Medication management*
- *Eating*
- *Cognitive supervision*

Other activities such as meal preparation and housekeeping are not used to determine COPES eligibility, but are included in the overall evaluation.

The HCS social worker is the person to whom you can direct questions regarding your eligibility. He or she will coordinate with your financial worker to determine if you meet all COPES criteria. Later, should you be approved for COPES, she or he will also be the one to arrange for a care provider. If you would like a family member or friend to be your paid care provider, the HCS social worker will help you arrange for this. **(Note: If you are applying for Assisted Living or Adult Family Home placement, you must take an active role in choosing the facility. Call Pathways Information and Assistance for information on how to do this.)**

Although there is no set timeline for the application process, most COPES applicants can expect to have an outcome regarding their eligibility within **45 calendar days** from the date of

their intake. Applicants who maintain communication with their HCS social worker will typically have quicker results.

You can find out who your HCS social worker is by calling **Home and Community Services at 206-341-7750**. Tell the person who comes on the line that you need the name and phone number of the social worker assigned to your case.

Client Notification

After you have undergone all parts of the application, you will receive an award letter from your financial worker. **The purpose of the award letter is to tell you if you have been approved for COPES.** The award letter tells you how many hours of care per month you will receive and your participation cost. The award letter will also tell you if you need to provide more information to the financial worker, or if your application has been denied.

The financial worker sends the award letter. The phone number of your financial worker will appear at the top of the letter. Any questions you may have regarding the financial information should be directed immediately to your financial worker. If you have questions about the number of hours of care you received, you will need to speak with your HCS social worker. Sometimes it is necessary for your medical providers to submit additional information.

Appealing a Decision

You have the right to appeal (challenge) the decisions made by either the HCS social worker or the financial worker. You can request a fair hearing. A fair hearing is a meeting during which you can present your situation before an objective third party called an administrative law judge. The judge will look at your situation and make a decision based on the information provided by each party.

Your request for a fair hearing must be submitted in writing to HCS within 10 working days of receiving your letter. Your fair hearing request should include the decision you want to challenge and a brief description of the reason(s) why you believe the decision was incorrect. If you need help with asking for a fair hearing, a specialist from Pathways Information and Assistance can help you.

You will receive a written response to your fair hearing request. It will tell you when and where the fair hearing is scheduled to take place. Should you need special accommodations for the hearing due to a disability, you are responsible for notifying the hearing coordinator. If you do not attend the fair hearing, it will be assumed that you have withdrawn your appeal.

Call Pathways Information and Assistance for a more detailed description of the appeal process.

Tips for Applicants:

- *Ask Questions* – If there is something you don't understand about the COPES program, ask somebody to explain it to you. The Pathways Information and Assistance specialists can answer most questions or direct you to someone who can.
- *Keep Notes* – Include names and phone numbers of people you talk to, and find out what they are supposed to do. Record the dates of all conversations, and note what took place. Keep a timeline so you can recreate the sequence of events if needed.
- *Make Copies of All Documents (for your records)* – Including applications and verification information. If something gets lost, you have an extra copy as a spare.
- *Complete and Return Paperwork in a Timely Manner* – Your application can be stalled or terminated if you do not do the necessary paperwork. Using certified mail and return receipt can be a way to track that your application was received. Once you are assigned to an HCS social worker, maintain regular contact with them throughout the application process.
- *Be Realistic about Your Needs* – During the Personal Care Evaluation, describe what things you need help with. Let the social worker know what you can and can't do, and also include the things that take a long time or are tiring for you.
- *Explore Alternatives* – Find out what other care options are available. Use the information to make a back-up plan.
- *Complex Situations* – A list of attorneys who specialize in Medicaid is available from Pathways



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